

# CFANS Semester Abroad in Nepal: Assisting Kumroj Community Forest User Group to Develop an Eco-tourism Plan

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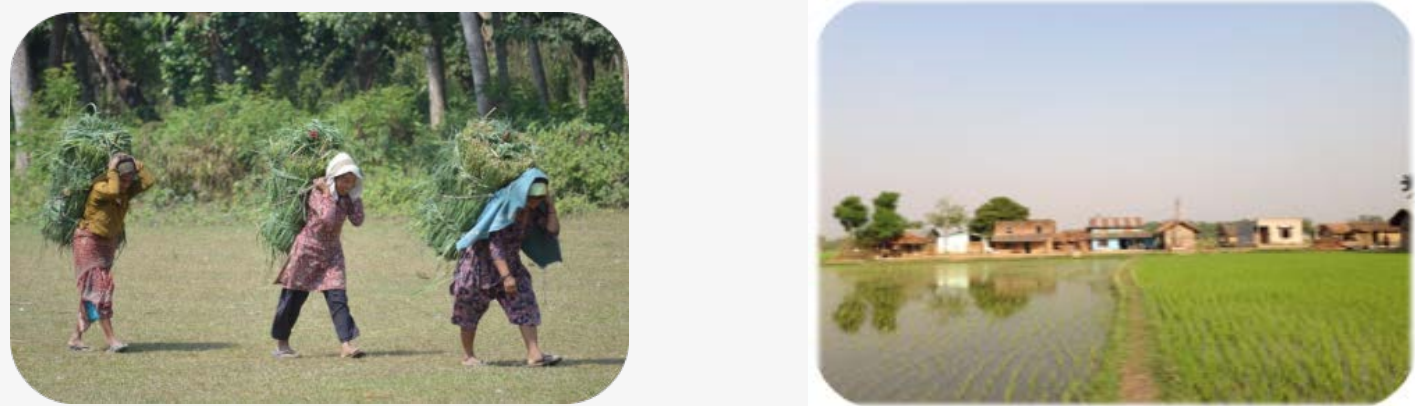


### Buffer Zone Community Forests

During the 1980's the Nepalese government began handing over tracks of forest to local communities for management. At this time many forests in Nepal were degraded and suffering deforestation. By allowing local communities to manage their own forests it gives people a sense of pride and ownership.

Buffer zone community forests, like Kumroj, help to protect suitable habitat for wildlife next to national parks.

Buffer zone community forests have to abide by certain regulations which limit their ability to use forest resources due to their proximity to national parks. In return these forests are managed by the local community and the community receives a portion of the tourism receipts from the national park.



### Background

As part of the CFANS Semester Abroad in Nepal, students work with local community forest user groups (CFUGs) to design projects with the objective of assisting the communities address issues of interest to them. The Kumroj CFUG has a limited eco-tourism program and were interested in expanding the role of eco-tourism in support of local livelihoods and conservation. Their achievements in restoring forests in their community and increased presence of wildlife in the forests they manage provide opportunities for eco-tourism development.

The students in the course designed individual and group projects to generate information and recommendations for the Kumroj CFUG on the following themes:

History of the community-Mike  
Wildlife in the community forest-Lisa  
Trail development-Logan  
Forest carbon inventory-Paul  
Invasive species inventory-Alicia  
Ecotourism development options-Kristin  
Future Development options-Leiloni

The students combined interview data from the community with field surveys of the flora and fauna to develop basic information and maps that the CFUG and development and non-governmental organizations can use as the community advances towards their development goals.

### History/General Information

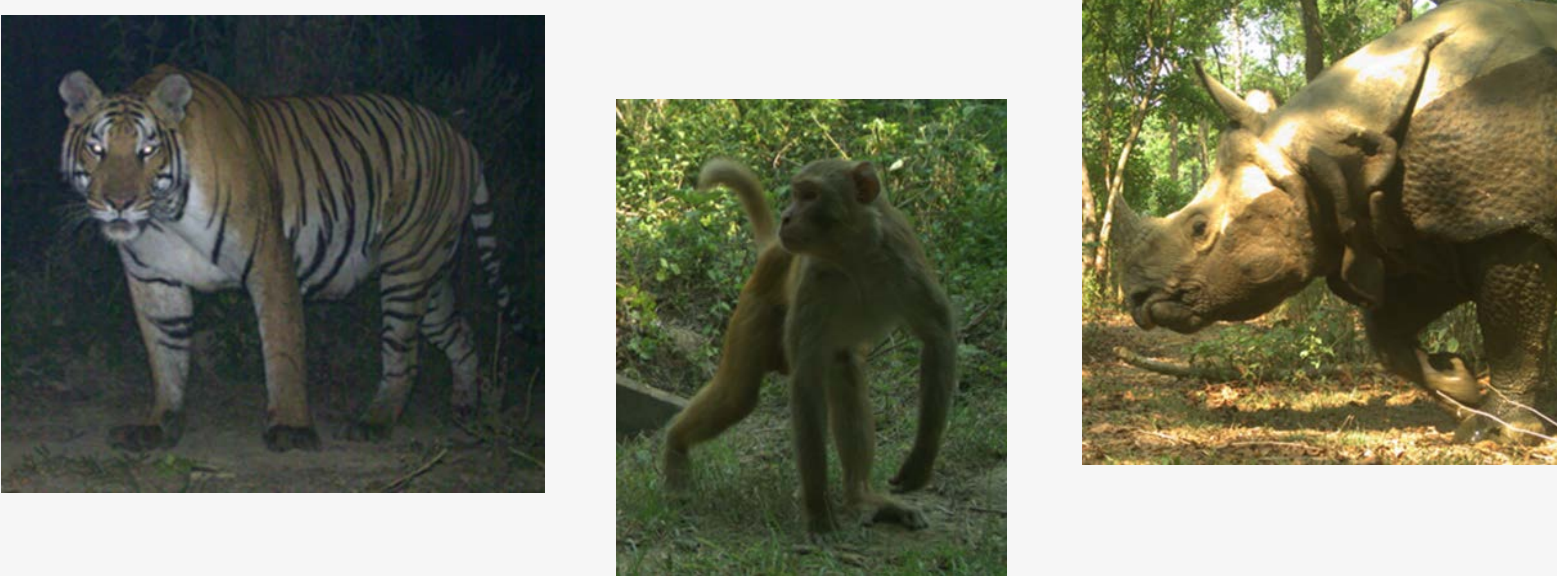
Kumroj Community Forest is a Buffer Zone Forest of Chitwan National Park

- 1,750 households and 8,000 residents representing 16 castes
- Rice, wheat, corn and veg. production
- Forest used for fuel, fodder and construction materials
- Forest severely degraded with restoration initiated in late '80's with a total area restored of 697 ha.
- Ecotourism which started in 1997 generates approx. \$45,000 annually
- Immigration has become an issue
- Model biogas village. Biogas from livestock takes pressure off forest

### Wildlife

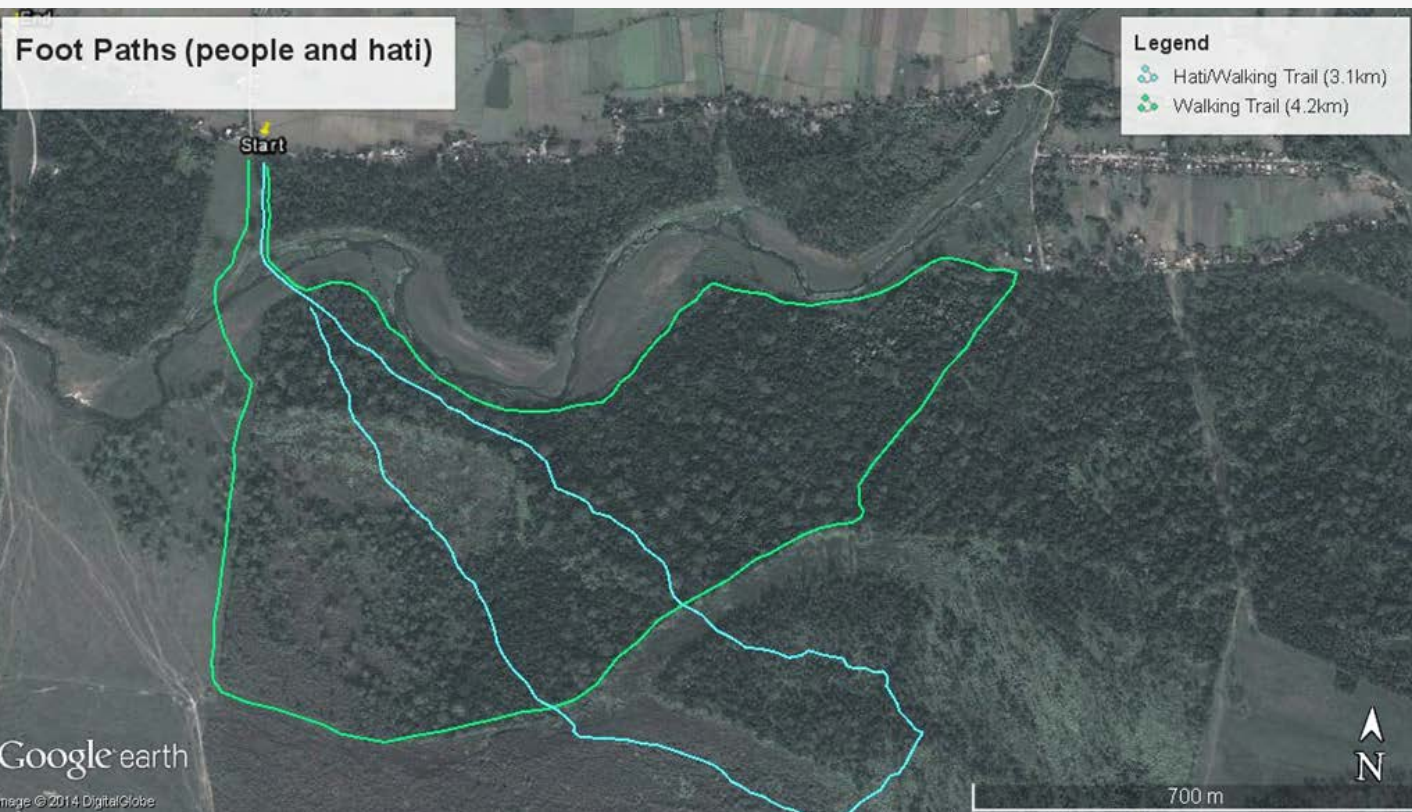
A wildlife list was developed and pictures were obtained through camera trapping for promotion and informational materials.

- 65 Species of Birds
- 15 Species of Mammals
- 1 Python



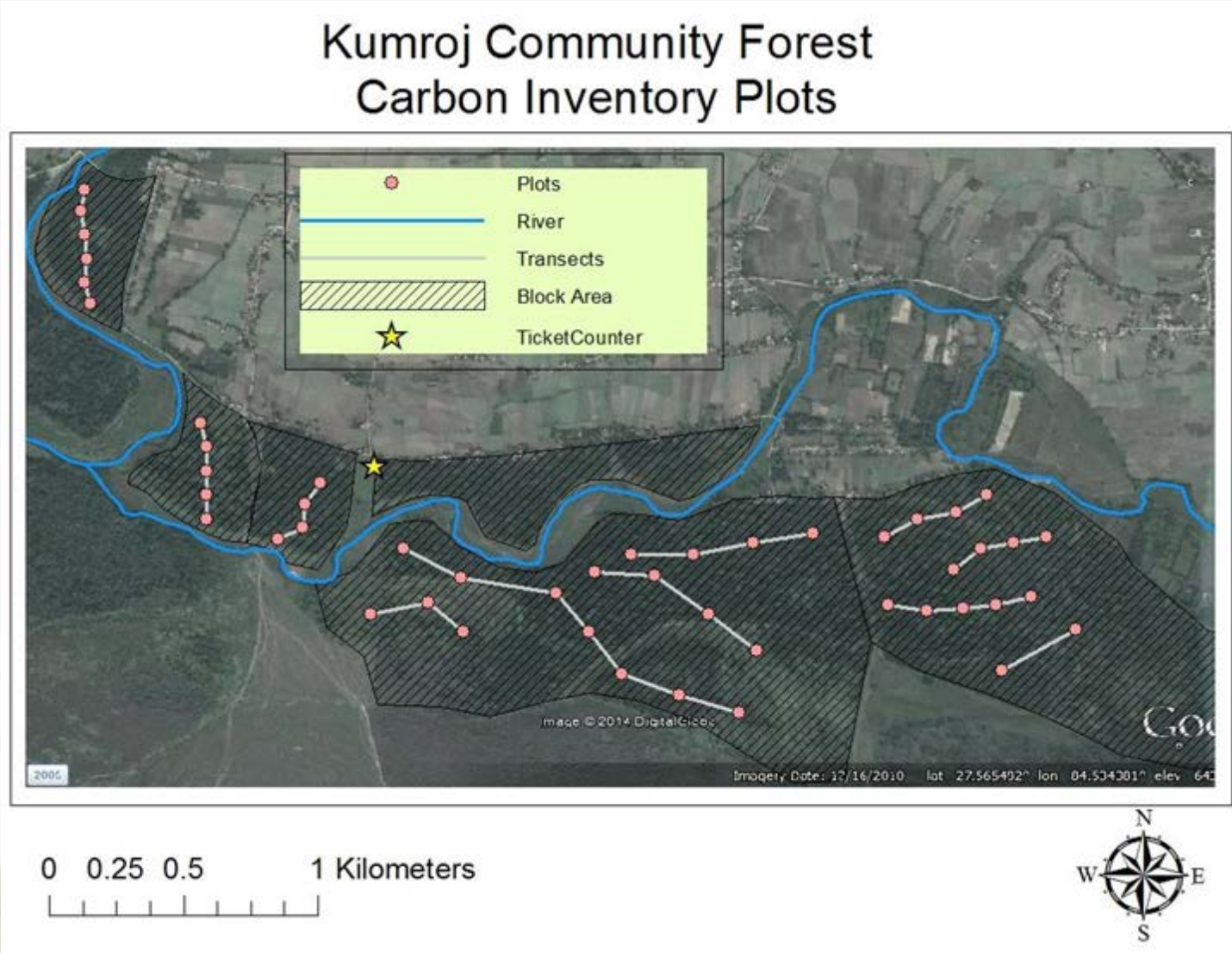
### Trails

Trails were marked, geo-referenced and mapped for foot, elephant and jeep traffic.



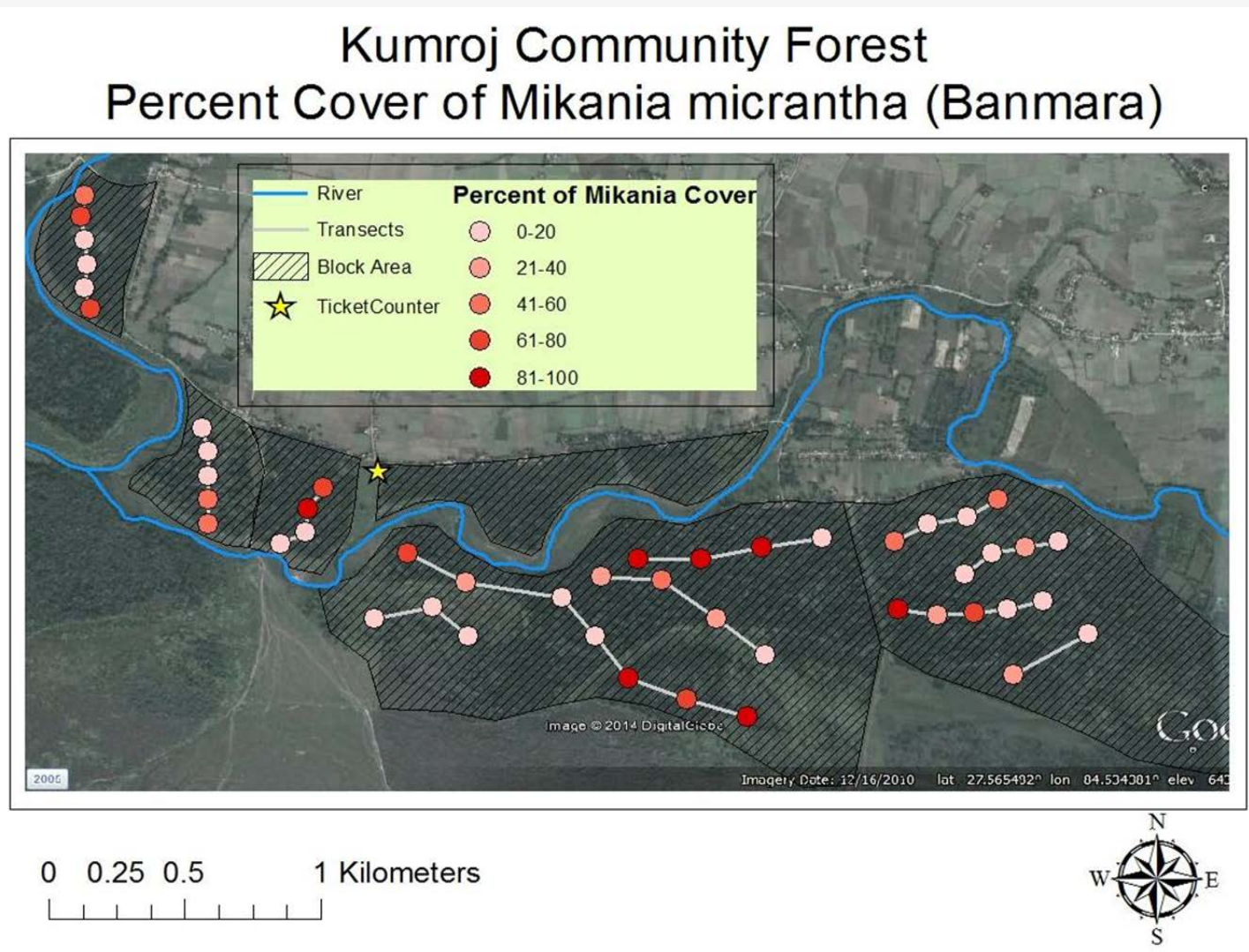
### Forest Carbon

A forest inventory was carried out and compared to a previous inventory to determine carbon increment



### Invasive Species

Information on the occurrence and density of invasive species was also registered on the forest inventory plots to establish a baseline for monitoring



### Tourism Development

Community members as well as stakeholders in the communities and the tourism industry were interviewed to develop recommendations on Homestays (Guidelines, networking and social guides), marketing and vegetation management to enhance the visitors experience.



### Future Development Options

Community stakeholders including members of underrepresented groups and women were interviewed as part of a community stakeholder assessment. Based on those interviews and an integration of the information from other students suggestions were prepared for:

- Ecotourism
- Conservation, and
- Development

Preliminary results were presented to the community leaders to receive input and suggestions and a final presentation was made to community representatives as well as local government and park officials and a final written report will be provided to the community in Nepali.



### Acknowledgments

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